



LECTURE

ON

THE ART OF DELIVERY,

AND THE

INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

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ON

THE ART OF DELIVERY,

ETC., ETC.

ELOCUTION, or the Art of Delivery, is a subject of such universal importance in a land of popular institutions like ours, that every individual, of whatever social rank, should be initiated into, at least, its rudiments, theoretical and practical. These comprise distinct enunciation, natural modulation of the voice, the power of "speaking out" with pulmonary ease, and a graceful carriage of the body. These fundamental requisites of oratory should be imparted in the common school, commencing in the alphabet class, and progressing through every subsequent stage of education till fixed by the routine into a habit.

The meaning of the term Elocution has undergone a change since the days of the first writers on the subject. The Art of Oratory, which was so popular a study with the ancient Greeks and Romans, was taught under four great divisions—Invention, Disposition, Elocution, and Pronunciation. Invention and Disposition treated of the selection and arrangement of arguments; Elocution, of the choice of language and rhetorical figures; and Pronunciation, of the management of the voice and gesture. This last department was always reckoned of the first importance, for without a knowledge of this, all the other branches of the

subject were comparatively powerless. Thus, a ready and fertile invention of new grounds of argument and ratiocination, could avail but little without a knowledge of the best modes of disposition, to classify the mass of ideas, and range them in the most comprehensive and forcible array; and these arranged grounds of argument and reasoning needed the aid of the third oratorical division before they could be made practically serviceable; appropriate language was necessary to give the mental conceptions a visible existence. Still there was a deficiency: written language was little effective, and its power necessarily circumscribed to those few who could read with discernment and profit. The art of bringing out the latent beauties and energies of language by oral expression, and of enforcing argument by the powerful language of emotion, was therefore studied as the climax of the whole. The paramount importance of a good delivery on all occasions, accounts for the preservation of this division of the ancient art of Oratory from the desuetude into which the systematic formalities of Composition have fallen. The topics and common-places which formed the ready framework for all sorts of disquisitions, and supplied an exuberance of matter applicable to any subject, could not be carried into the business of life. Every-day concerns demand perspicuous brevity; they would only be embarrassed by circumlocution. The ancient *loci* consequently have been confined to the composition of set harangues, and verbose writings on laconic texts; to abstract questions and philosophical speculations. But to whatever style of composition we give utterance, a cultivated delivery is equally necessary.

Writings will vary as writers change their models, or as they create new styles of composition; but the good speaker follows no variable example; for Nature is his guide. All ideas being accompanied by some sensation in the mind, he joins the natural expression of the sensation with the conventional signs of the idea; and thus his tones, looks, gestures, rate of utterance, &c., serve to extend the province of language, and make it speak to the feelings as well as to the intellect. For, the verbal signs of ideas do not stand as symbols of feeling also: and even though the idea which the words represent naturally gives rise to certain emotions, the mere words will not call up the feeling, though they represent the thought. Thus it is quite possible—

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nay, how common!—to read a sentence with full comprehension of its ideas, yet without any of the indices of feeling which the ideas necessarily excite in the person placed in the situation which the words describe.

Elocution may be defined—"The Art of Speech." It comprehends all that gives effect to composition in delivery: the management of the voice, and the organs of articulation; and also the external signs of emotion, as manifested by the countenance, the eyes, and the gesticulations of the body.

Without the graces of delivery, the finest composition is little more effective than the rudest and most unpolished. Intrinsic beauty is obscured by awkwardness and want of extrinsic embellishment. As the brilliancy of a lustrous mineral is seen only when the surface is polished, and the gem is most admired when polished most; so the felicities of language are only recognised in appropriate delivery, and best appreciated when most skillfully delivered.

The sermon to which we listened with eager attention, and with a feeling of personal interest, from some talented preacher, would have produced no impression on our feelings, had its delivery been entrusted to the monotonous clerk. The speech that thrilled all the chords of sympathy, as its rich, varied melody fell on our absorbed senses from the lips of the master tragedian, would have failed to move us—except to laughter—had the call-boy spoken it.

By such facts, the advocates for a cold, stoical delivery, may surely be answered. In both cases which we have supposed, the subject-matter undergoes no change. The finely apposite simile,—the conclusive reasoning,—the bold apostrophe,—the smooth melody of chosen words and artistically formed periods, remain the same—yet, how different their effects! We cannot concede the propositions, that the mental faculties are so powerful, as only to require plain facts to be plainly set before them; and that the reasoning powers need only to perceive the *pro et con* of argument, in order to draw conclusions on any subject: daily experience shows us that the mind cannot profitably exert its powers, whether of perception, conception, judgment, or of any other class, unless its full and undivided attention can be commanded; and also, that the mind will not sustain attentiveness unless it can be interested. Still, true it is, that there are those

who condemn and repudiate any attempt at rhetorical delivery as an effort to bias the mind, and influence the judgment against its calm dictates. Above all, they would banish Elocution from the pulpit—as theatrical, unbecoming the sacred rostrum, and as, withal, an insult to their reason,—to that very reason which, we venture to assert, were it exercised without prejudice, would surely controvert the position so dogmatically maintained. For, the object and the tendency of Elocution are to awaken, not to sway the judgment—to fix attention to argument, not to subvert the reasoning faculties. This, simply, is the province of Elocution; and they who would banish its attractions from the pulpit, and exile them to the stage, do high service to profanity, and vast disservice and dishonour to religion.

When preachers attach any meaning to the epithet—theatrical delivery, what is the manner of which they speak, and by whom is it practised? Whom in the histrionic profession do they stigmatize? They cannot certainly mean the Kembles, the Siddonses, the Youngs, the Keans, the Macreadys, of the stage. Such gifted players, and some even of less note, have shed a glory on the theatrical profession, and given to our National Councils the most illustrious models of judicial eloquence, as exemplified in Chatham, Pitt, Sheridan, and Canning.

Indeed, it is not likely that reverend gentlemen, few of whom are ever seen within the walls of a theatre, can of their own knowledge venture an opinion respecting the manner of any actor. The assertions upon which the objections are founded are scarcely worthy of notice. They are the crude and ignorant remarks of persons very little competent to form any judgment of the histrionic art. We are inclined to think that when the great actor's declamatory powers are condemned, the plot, and some particular character of the drama, rather than the style of delivery, must be the real objects of reprobation. Under any circumstances, the true representatives of the stage cannot be included in the general censure. The mere underlings of our theatres may, not unjustly, be repudiated as models for imitation; but no reasonable critic could denounce the acting of Garrick or Kemble, in *Hamlet*, for no other cause than that the parts of *Rozencrantz* and *Guildenstern* were miserably filled. Are we to judge of an art which calls into action, and can only be sustained by, the highest accomplishments, mental and bodily, by the rude

essays of men whose best achievements would not entitle them to a fourth-rate place on the dramatic scale? Would the sentence be just which should condemn the eminent masters in painting, for no better reason than that a few daubers had exhibited their ungainly offspring as signs to public houses? As the noble art of Painting would be, so the grand and intellectual art of Acting is, instead of being injured or degraded, the more exalted by such paltry and ignorant efforts to decry it.

A theatrical manner of delivery, in its legitimate and artistical meaning, is chaste, pure, classical. The harmonious action of the vocal organs—the faculties of speech co-operating with the highest powers of the intellect—the heart speaking to the heart, in language and tones which never offend by their vulgarity, and which captivate the mind, without “o’erstepping the modesty of nature,”—this it is to be in a just sense “theatrical;” and to ^{his} extent, we sincerely wish, even for the sake of our religious services, that all persons who read the Sacred Scriptures, and the divine compositions in the Liturgy, or who proclaim to men the hopes and blessings of our faith, were studious of being theatrical in their manner of delivery. It was with such soul-expressive utterance that the Apostle of the Gentiles spoke and “reasoned of righteousness and judgment to come,” when the Roman governor trembled under the magical influence of the Christian Orator.

The stage has declined in popular estimation, chiefly from the want of systematic education in its professors. The pulpit sulies its substantial erudition, by sinking, in respect of delivery, to a much lower deep, than that which conceals the dramatic genius of English literature.

But we cannot conceive that the great want of anything like skill in reading, which has been so long the blemish of the British pulpit, is owing to the low estimation in which the clergy hold the art of delivery. We rather think, with Mr Sheridan, that the cause and fault of their inefficiency lie not in themselves, so much as in the erroneous way in which they have been *taught to read by their early instructors.*

Mr Sheridan remarks—“They are originally set wrong on principle, and yet think themselves right. And when the faulty manner has taken root, by custom, and a length of years, how difficult, nay impossible would it be, even supposing that

they were made conscious of it, to change such habits, without the assistance of skilful persons to point out the particulars in which they are faulty, and show how they may be amended. And the man who wants such information from a consciousness of his deficiency, is yet restrained from applying for it, by a false shame ; considering it as a disgrace to acknowledge that he did not know how to read at that time of life. For this is the light in which they consider it, confounding under one term, two very distinct things, that of mere reading, and of reading well."

These circumstances, which tend to exonerate the custom-enslaved reader from the charge of neglect, afford no justification to those who have not time-fixed habits to contend against, nor do they exculpate the great seats of learning, for their scanty,—nay, almost total want of any—provision for the Elocutionary training of their students. The heads of our Universities and Colleges are grossly negligent in this particular. They fit their scholars for an enlightened intercourse with books,—but not with men. They

“ Give an understanding, but no tongue ;”

and, therefore, to them may be justly attributed much of the vocal incapacity which prevails. The Bar, learned in the subtleties of the law, keen in its logic, and remarkable for its zeal, enounces its technicalities and profuse phraseology with every provincial phase of utterance. The collected wisdom of the united kingdoms, even our senatorial assemblies, exhibit also in some degree the geographical diversities of speech that characterize the uneducated. Our universities, rich in the treasures of science, profoundly conversant with the venerable lore of which the classic languages of Greece and Rome are the depositaries, are to no small extent tainted with the latitudinal and longitudinal brogues, and other vices of delivery. Now, these distinctive marks,—which, if they may not always tell the place of birth, do, in a manner liable to little mistake, proclaim where and how each individual has been educated,—are the results of early negligence, the badges of school neglect. The formation of such habits should be counteracted from the first, and in every stage of education, IN THE SCHOOL, where that pure and classical parlance should prevail, which indicates, not a province, but the region of good society.

Is it not strange, while the highest specimens extant of prac-

tical eloquence are to be found in those dead languages which engross our students and, ridiculously, even our schoolboys, that these models of oratory have not been taken as exemplars in the natural sense, by teaching us to cultivate our mother tongue? Worthless to us are the grand philippics and orations of an earlier civilization if they do not teach us this lesson. Bootless folly it is to persist as we do "in seeking the living among the dead." Our universities are filled by young men from every part of the country, with every tint of rusticity on their tongues, and we set them to study the languages of Tully and Demosthenes, when they cannot speak their own vernacular with propriety! In due time the novices are gowned, capped, and diplomaed before an admiring world as Masters of Arts,—masters of all arts but that—the first in importance—of being enduring, far less eloquent, in the delivery of their native language. Why are there not Professorships for Eloquence? and why are not academical honours awarded to the successful student of elocution? These are questions which have been often asked, but which have only received for answer the echoes of the venerable scholastic piles.

Delivery, in the estimation of the classic ancients, held its natural rank as a study of pre-eminent importance and prime necessity,—and the excellence of the old orators was the consequence. Now, in our neglect of this Art, delivery is—as the ingenious Dr Rush of America has ludicrously, but too truly described it—a mere instinct, by which some men only bleat, bray, bark, whinny, or mew, a little better than others.

Few of our speakers possess any more than an instinctive acquaintance with the processes of speech. Although these are entirely artificial, our Orators know nothing of speaking as an Art. Little has been done by authors—as observers—to investigate the principles of this Art; but in many cases, where grammarians, elocutionists, and lexicographers have ventured to speak of the mechanics of articulation and vocalization, they have done so ignorantly, and with gross misdirection. On these fundamentals of Oratory, the great majority of our "Rhetorical Readers" and "Academic Speakers" are absolutely silent, as if the subject were unworthy of attention; whereas the omission of this rudimental instruction renders the directions that are given worthless and unavailing. These latter consist chiefly of rules which pre-suppose in the pupil a perfect mastery over the processes of pronunciation, in-

flection, &c. ; rules, too, which are almost limitless in extent and variety, but which may be fully superseded by some half-a-dozen easily apprehended principles.

This useless multiplication of rules constitutes the great error in almost all our modern systems of Delivery or Elocution. Instead of making the rules of Nature our study, we are taught the rules of the Elocutionist, and Nature is made to strain and worm itself into them. It is like a tailor first making a garment, and then clipping the customer to fit his handiwork. Every one will at once see the folly of this operation ; and he would soon show disapprobation, in a way which could not be mistaken by the unfortunate practitioner who should attempt it ! So in the former case. Nature is not that passive thing which its Elocutionary tailors would make it. *It* resists also. The countenance affords a test, happily independent of the will, of the extent to which the speaker's feelings are affected. There is an index in the countenance, which, though it does not ensure us against hypocrisy, is yet a strong check upon it ; insomuch that, if any passion lurks within, if the feelings are touched, there are natural symptoms which cannot be suppressed. Lavater, the celebrated physiognomist, will be allowed to be no mean authority on this subject. He says :—“ When any passion is called into action, such passion is *depicted* by the motions of the muscles ; and these motions are accompanied by a strong palpitation of the heart. If the countenance be tranquil, it always denotes tranquillity in the region of the breast.” By this test, were we to measure the degree of earnestness of many whose prelections are on subjects of the most vital importance, we should find it fall far, very far, short of what the subject demands. Indeed, we have high authority for doubting *the credibility* of the assertions of those who use none of the natural signs of the feelings to enforce the truth of what they affirm.

We would not, indeed, carry out this principle to its full extent, and refuse credence to the calm, philosophic speaker ; but we may justly suspect the sincerity of him who does not only neglect the externals of natural feeling, but who indulges in others at variance with every expression of nature. There is a cant of this kind which has been called the “reading brogue”—a whining, sing-song expression, which is most common where least admissible, viz., in reading religious composition. That this has many

pious and zealous imitators we do not doubt ; but that it has originated in callousness and indifference, we conceive there can be as little question.

We instinctively read the countenance of a speaker before he opens his lips, and from such glances speculate with much truth upon his character ; and when the powers of articulation are imperfect or slow, we anticipate the words by our perusal of the feelings which are depicted on the face. Words are but arbitrary signs of ideas, and can only be understood by those who have been trained to the connection. The language of feeling is a natural one—not national or local. In whatever tongue we may articulate, strangers to its meaning would yet interpret the leading feelings which actuate us, were we to cultivate the union of the natural with the artificial language. In this union our countrymen are much more defective than our continental neighbours. Caution is a leading feature in the national character, and its effect is to conceal the workings of the passions. This gives a firmness and steadiness, but, at the same time, a frigidity to the character. To avoid volatility, we run into the opposite extreme, and become solid to insipidity.

The Abbé Maury, an eminent French writer on Eloquence, says, and justly says, of the English :—“ Famous islanders ! it is not genius, it is the genius of Oratory that you want. The human mind owes an unceasing debt of gratitude for your sublime discoveries on light, on gravitation, on electricity, on the aberration of the stars ; but let not your pride be wounded if we contest the pre-eminence with your orators. Eloquence, the usual companion of liberty, is a stranger in your country. Add to the glory of the good actions which are so common there, the merit, perhaps no less honourable, of knowing how to celebrate them.”

Elocution has been considered a study beyond the sphere of the middle ranks of society ; and the consequence of this mistake has been its neglect by all classes. The effects of this neglect are seen in the various dialects which prevail in different localities, and the numerous defects of utterance which abound in all ; and which, in their mildest forms, are a disagreeable blemish, while in many instances they constitute a very serious drawback to advancement in life. Were the art of Speech properly understood and taught in our initiatory schools, these often painful afflictions would not find a place in the catalogue of human

infirmities. For we cannot withhold our conviction, that the cause of the generally low state of articulative power is no other than the worthless manner in which reading is taught at our schools;—not merely worthless, but positively injurious—for it does not only fail to make good readers—to check vicious habits of speech, or to impart any one principle by which to regulate vocal action—but it gives additional root and culture to defects, and sows them where they had not a previous existence. The reason is: words, and not sounds, are taught. No explanation is attempted of the principles by which the various phenomena of speech are produced. The air, which is moulded into audible forms by the most artificial of all processes, is not even recognised as the indispensable material which it is; for no provision is made for regulating its use: the wonderfully plastic organization, by the delicate movements and flexions of which, the ever-varying combinations of sounds are struck off with a lightness and dexterity unequalled by any mechanism that human skill has devised, is left to the uncertain guidance of chance; and its operations have no other director than instinctive imitation. Our elocutionary condition, therefore, can only be in proportion to that of those who have happened to be our models. Thus, in the natural course of events, we retrograde, and not advance, beyond the standard which chance had assigned to us.

There is scarcely any individual who does not afford some exercise to the very sensitive imitative faculties of youth. The eye of a professed critic has not so keen a perception as that of the infant, to whom all things are new. The child that you fondle on your knee is imperceptibly and insensibly photographing, in a most tenacious memory, whatever may be most striking in your manners or appearance; and the day will come when those first impressions will beget life-lasting habits! Imitation is the great agent in the formation of society—the busiest, and the most powerful. It is a leader which enlists all, and does not ask the will's consent. To imitation we owe our national habits and our provincial peculiarities—the burr of Northumberland, and the buzzing of Somersetshire; the drawl of rusticity, and the flip-pant accents of the metropolis; the sharp intonation of Aberdeen, and the sonorous twang of Fifeshire; the nasal tones of some of the American States; the numerous *patois* of France, and district dialects in all countries. It is, therefore, to be de-

sired that, when we have been endowed with a perfect vocal organization, we should be taught—what Nature will not direct us in—the right use of it ; if it were for no other reason than that we may so hand down the same as an inheritance to the rising generation. Let *us* cultivate a correct and natural way of speaking in ourselves, and the next generation will need less instruction.

The first step in any work is in general the most important. Upon the correct laying of the keel and timbers depends the true proportional conformation of the sides of the future vessel ; upon the solidity of the foundation depends the security of the superincumbent house. And so in mental structures. The three simple rules which form the basis of the science of arithmetic, are indispensable to the working of any problem throughout the wide range of the science. If *they* are neglected, there is little hope of progress in the more abstruse parts of the study. And as with arithmetic, so with the art of reading. The Alphabet, which is the raw material, from the union of which into artificial combinations the whole fabric of written language is woven, is justly made the first object of the teacher's care. Without a preliminary acquaintance with these elements of words, advancement must be tedious and uncertain. The alphabet is, or ought to be, a collection of all the letters which represent the simple sounds and articulations of the language, so as to exhibit its elements at one view ; and if the *powers* of the letters coincided with the *names* assigned to them, a knowledge of the alphabet would go far to enable the tyro to read. We all know the time which is usually spent in acquiring a facility in naming the letters ; and we likewise know how far we are, then, from being able to enounce at sight even their most simple combinations. Indeed, so great a want of connection is there between the names and powers of the letters of the English alphabet, that a child might with almost equal advantage be set to study the Hebrew characters, or the Chinese hieroglyphics, as a preliminary to learning to read, as he kept so long and so uselessly drudging with our a, b, c.

In the discrepancies of the alphabet lie the roots of those monstrosities which predominate in school-boy reading, and which have almost banished Nature from our oratory. Our alphabet is grossly imperfect ; and it will always, while uncorrected, render

a knowledge of the elements of our language far more difficult of attainment than it ought to be : yet the alphabet is not so bad but that with care, and the requisite skill in *sounds* on the part of the teacher, it may be made to answer all necessary purposes, without the formidable but otherwise unavoidable work, of reforming our entire orthography.

There is but one rational way of teaching the Alphabet for the purposes of speech : it is to impart only *the actual powers of the letters, irrespective of their names*. By this mode of initiation, a foundation would be laid for perfect articulation, and at every onward step, conducted on just principles of Art, improvement would keep pace with progression.

There is no process more delicate than that of fixing the true seats of the articulations of speech. It requires in the teacher an intimate knowledge of the nature of the machinery to which he is giving action ; and an ear refined by cultivation, and quickened by practice to detect errors in the employment of the vocal mechanism, in cases where the motion of the parts is concealed from the eye. The want of these requisites on the part not only of abecedarians, but of teachers of reading generally, accounts for the very rare instances in which we find graceful and distinct enunciation ; or even the latter, however awkward, in the youths who have finished their academical training.

All persons who profess to teach reading should be thoroughly acquainted with what we may call the classical pronunciation of the elements of speech. This knowledge ought to be an indispensable requisite even in an elementary teacher of reading ; for it is of greater moment, both as respects the pupils individually and the community which requires his services, than in the master the most profound acquaintance with the dead languages. This necessary accomplishment is rarely to be found ; and, we are sorry to say, that no present or contemplated future educational reform makes the possession of such requisites compulsory on teachers of this important branch of education. Nay, are candidates for the preceptorial office even encouraged to make themselves practically efficient in the *phonics* of speech ? Does this Educational Institute of Scotland incite its noviciates to pursue this study, by the hope of honourable recognition of achieved ability ? No : the highest practical skill earns no laurels here, unless the living accomplishment carry as a passport the *sine quâ*

non of dead lore. Whatever be the candidate's chosen educational sphere—writing, drawing, arithmetic, dancing, or the a, b, c—one of the first requirements of his examiners is a knowledge of the Classics! Absurd! This policy ignores the fact that teaching is an art; altogether different from, and to a great extent independent of, mere book-knowledge. While the Institute aims at becoming a constituted authority, whose licence to teach shall be acknowledged as necessary for the duly qualified instructor, it really affords no guarantee for excellence in the practical work of teaching. Examination papers may suffice to put the candidate's knowledge to the proof, but there is much in the art of teaching that cannot be so tested, but which must be tried by the standard of actual experiment.

As the aspirant to the honour of a diploma from a Medical or Surgical Board, must, in addition to the necessary amount of theoretical knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, and pharmacy, prove his pharmaceutical experience in the laboratory and dispensary, his clinical experience in the hospital, his ability to operate by scalpel experience in the dissecting-room; so the candidate for the diploma of a duly qualified teacher, should be required, not only to pass examination on his course of preparatory study, but also, and chiefly, to prove his practical ability in the class-room, in that department of the art of teaching to which he intends devoting himself, and for which he seeks to obtain a certificate of fitness.

There would be some reason in the present mode of procedure, if teachers, like medical men, were liable to be called at a moment's notice to practise indiscriminately all departments of their profession; but when, as is generally the case, each educational practitioner confines his instruction to some one subject, or some limited range of subjects, how absurd it is to compel him to be, less a master in that one chosen and peculiar province, than a smatterer in all departments! For such is practically the effect of setting up a fixed standard of general knowledge for the different grades of Membership, Associate-ship, and Fellowship, irrespective of peculiar departmental excellence, and of requiring as the first qualification here, there, and everywhere, in all grades and departments, the invariable item, "classics, classics, classics." Why, a man may be the best calligraphist, and the best teacher of penmanship in a

parish, though ignorant as a city Arab of *hic, hæc, hoc*, and altogether *unlettered* in Greek ; and an Educational Council ought to certify the measure and the kind of his professional ability, without reference to his incompetency in any non-professional department. And, on the other hand, a person may be skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians, as well as of the Greeks and Romans, and yet unqualified to teach a class with a tittle of the effect of one who with infinitely less erudition, is master of the Art of Discipline, including in that term Scholastic Government and (to frame a word) Didactics.

I have not wandered from my text in passing these strictures on the general policy of our Institute. The teacher of reading has to do with sounds as well as letters, and I do not find that any share of attention is prescribed for the attainment of vocal efficiency in candidates. A teacher who is not himself acquainted with the principles of vocal modulation, or who cannot exemplify them in his own practice, must fail in this department of his teaching, if he attempt it ; but he will most naturally bestow no attention at all upon the subject, and his pupils may, without direction or correction, shout or whine or stutter, and spread the contagion of a vicious example over an entire school.

Besides, when an attempt is made to impart instruction in Elocution, it is too commonly confined to useless recitations, and the repetition of rules, in the fancied application of which, Nature and the intention of the precepts are most wondrously outraged, by the pompous mouthing and singularly mechanical intonation, which are presented as the elocutionary model, and practical exemplification of the printed rules. The truth is, the study of Elocution has been impracticably encumbered with rules, beneath which its few and simple principles lie buried and unthought of ; so much so, that teachers, with all varieties of dialect and styles of intonation, read and teach, as they conceive, in accordance with the rules, while in fact they are but communicating to the pupil their own artificiality of manner ; checking and warping, instead of strengthening and developing, that inborn faculty of eloquence which flourished in the nursery, till it was blighted in the schoolroom. A preliminary to rules for the reading of sentences is wanted in a practical gamut of sounds. Music cannot be learned without its gamut, nor can the soul-expressive

melody of speech be attained or taught without this fundamental requisite,—a knowledge of its scales.

Sounds were before letters ; letters are the signs, *sounds* the things signified. The rational order, therefore, would surely be to teach—not the symbols first, but the things of which they are symbolic. What shall we say, then, of the ordinary course of school instruction, which begins and ends with the signs, and altogether ignores the sounds—teaches the *type*, and neglects to teach the antitype ? The process is as unnatural as its results are abortive. His own mouth, and not a hornbook, should be the child's primer ; his ear, and not his eye, should be the first medium of instruction. And thus, instead of ability to articulate lagging behind even the tardy knowledge of letters, it would be greatly in advance of literary skill. We begin with books too soon : we should teach to speak, and speak fluently, before we prescribe a single printed lesson. By conversational instruction, and articulative exercise, how delightful may a child's first months at school be made ! And there would be no time lost even in the acquisition of letters ; for with the occasional use of a black board, all the literal elements of language that are the object of such painful learning to the uninterested mind, would be taught by merely incidental and amusing illustration,—ay, and better taught than when they are made the object of direct instruction.

Next to the moulding of a distinct articulation, the proper modulation of a child's voice should be the first care of every teacher of the elements of language. We will be bold enough to assert, that there are few, if any public schools in the United Kingdom, in which the pupils are taught to read with that deep and impressive harmony of which the human voice is capable, even in the tender years of infancy. A wildly fatiguing falsetto, foreign to nature, not allied to the intellect, destructive to healthy respiration, is made the channel of the breath, and for sounds which but for this barbarous pitch of voice, would glow with that ardour of truth and nature which warm hearts can feel when addressing kindred spirits. It is absurd to think that the screech and squeal are the natural keys for the voices even of infants. A little practice in the right direction would remove from our schools this offensive and injurious custom.

Perhaps few schoolmasters are aware that the general health

of their pupils may be promoted, or sometimes seriously impaired, by the state of respiration, while engaged in their reading exercises. The vocalization of the breath, so as not to interfere with the vital and pulmonary necessities, requires attention, and often consummate skill on the part of the teacher. The high screaming key, so characteristic of reading in nearly all our seminaries, is incompatible with salutary respiration; and it renders the effective cultivation of oratory, in after-life, almost impracticably difficult. The voice becomes so inflexible, and the ear so depraved, that practically the custom is indeed a second Nature. For this our schools are answerable. Let them teach sounds before letters—the elements of pronunciation before the rudiments of writing—speaking before reading, and English before classics; and let them cultivate a conversational modulation of the voice in every exercise, and the harshness and deformity of the second nature will give place to the soul-attuned harmony, grace, and euphony of the first and primal Nature.

Passing over the gradations of one, two, and three syllable practice, let us direct our attention to the more advanced pupils—to those who have gone through all preliminaries, and rank in the enviable elevation of the senior class. We place a book in the hands of the dux—the proud wearer of the silver medal—and he reads a paragraph. We observe by his reading that he has been taught to consider the commas, semicolons, colons, and full points, as the only allowable halting places, and to give to each of these *rests* a mutually proportionate duration: the comma being to the semicolon as *one* to *two*; the semicolon bearing the same proportion to the colon; and the colon to the full point.

Now these marks have no relation whatever to time, or to anything connected with delivery. They are simply used to show the grammatical connection of the parts of a sentence:—constructive perspicuity is their only aim. To accomplish that, not a fourth part of the marks is required or used which would be indispensable were their object to direct the voice in reading. It may be urged by teachers that they are fully aware of the object of common punctuation, and that they do not teach its reference to time only, but in conjunction with its true province—the elucidation of sense. We answer, that we judge of their ideas on such matters by the effects which we witness in their pupils.

We do not concede that to *know* is enough to qualify a person for teaching. The duly qualified preceptor is not the one who knows most, but he who has the greatest talent—for it is a peculiar one—of imparting his knowledge to others. It will not admit of denial that school-boys do read as if the punctuation commonly in use were their only direction in the art of managing the voice and breath. They sustain the same current of unvaried sound, and the same stream of air to the nearest mark; and, like a jaded horse hurrying on to its baiting place, they come in, panting and breathless. In consequence of this mismanagement—and the remark applies to more than school-boys—the last words of each emission are inaudible for want of physical power to give them due effect. Now every one acquainted at all with the subject knows, that the concluding words of a sentence are those which, generally, of all others require most enforcing. Here, then, is one glaring defect! But we often find, also, that the pupil, physically unable to keep up to the nearest point, pauses abruptly in the very middle of a sentence—nay, sometimes of a word—wherever, indeed, necessity compels him—to replenish his exhausted lungs.

From this random respiration we naturally infer, that the pupil has not been instructed in the relation of breath to speech at all, but that he is completely ignorant of the process which he is blindly conducting—the formation of articulate sounds. Acquainted with no way of economising the use of the breath—familiar with none of the places allowable for the recovery of what is necessarily expended; his chest is kept in a continual state of collapse, in order to squeeze out the little air which may remain in his lungs.

The evil which this practice produces is incalculable! The diseases which there is too much reason to fear it engenders, which we know it greatly aggravates, are of so insidious a nature, that they are often deeply rooted before their presence is known, and we are left to judge of the cause, only from the too ripened consequence. The habit becomes settled, the chest sunken, contracted, and almost inactive,—the lungs, consequently, have not sufficient room for the healthy performance of their functions: their expansion is never complete, nor can they retain long enough the air which they receive. The pressure of the thorax upon them, like that of the hand upon a sponge, expels the air as soon as it is

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inhaled ; yet does the poor sufferer, during this most baneful action, continue to read on, unconscious, for some time, of any other feeling than that of uneasiness—which is often attributed to bashfulness—till, perhaps, some serious pulmonary affection, brings his fate to a crisis. That this is no fanciful exaggeration, the consumptive aspect of a large proportion of young clergymen will too painfully manifest : while the really salutary nature of their public functions, properly conducted, is as plainly evidenced by the robust longevity of those whom better knowledge, or a happy intuition, has directed to a natural management of the breath.

Now, these evil consequences could not ensue, were the pupil taught to divide his sentences into their correlative or accentual groups of words, and to read by PROPOSITIONS, and not by punctuation. Every new subject, every new predicate, every new adjunct, expressive of manner, reason, time, place, or any other complement, whether it consist of a complete sentence or of a *word*—which is often an elliptical sentence—presents itself as an independent fact to the mind of the thinker ; and can only be justly uttered by the reader—as it is invariably by the extempore speaker—when pronounced with tone and pause that distinctly circumscribe the idea ;—thus presenting each separate fact to the hearer's mind as an independent conception, whatever be the degree of its correlation to the other facts in the context. In short, the principle which was advocated lately by Professor Mulligan,* as the basis of an improved method of teaching Grammar, is the only natural and effective one for teaching Reading ; and I have no hesitation in saying, that the general adoption of this principle in schools, either instead of, or in connection with, the ordinary method of *word-parsing*, would not only advance a knowledge of grammar, and skill in practical composition, but would tend, inevitably and

* Rev. John Mulligan, A.M. (of America.) This gentleman, in compliance with an invitation subscribed by a number of the leading teachers in Edinburgh, gave a public and gratuitous exposition of the principles laid down in his Treatise on the "Grammatical Structure of the English Language;" his object being to furnish an improved method of teaching grammar. The mode proposed consisted in the fundamental analysis of sentences into subjects, predicates, and adjuncts, rather than into verbal "parts of speech." The lecturer discarded the ordinary "parsing" terms, and advocated the substitution of a nomenclature for the clausular elements of sentences.

vastly, to the improvement of school-boy reading, both as regards accuracy of apprehension, and natural variety of vocal expression. Presenting much more frequent opportunities to modulate the voice and relieve the respiration, than ordinary punctuation affords, this principle of clausular pronunciation and inflection would not fail to break that monotonous continuity of tone which now prevails, and thus impart a conversational spontaneity to the vocal movements; while, at the same time, it would convert reading, from a laborious and often injurious task, into a most salutary exercise—a very antidote to pulmonary disease.

The limits of a single lecture do not admit of much exemplary illustration, or it might easily be manifested by abundant instances that, in correct and logical reading, the chief pauses and completive tones must often occur where there is not even a comma used in the common punctuation; and that semicolons, and even colons, are frequently printed—and justly so, according to the rules of punctuation—where the pause must be of the briefest, and the tone of the most continuative kind, where indeed hiatus of any sort is almost inadmissible.

The gasping and uneasy vocal respiration, the habit of which is acquired in schools, as the result of ill-directed reading, is but another proof that Public Oratory can derive little of good from the discipline of our schools in their present systematic neglect of the Physiology of Speech, from the Alphabet-class to the University. Letters are the all-absorbing object of study; sounds being as little thought of as if mankind were mute, and conversed only in writing: and the English language is as little studied as if our business in the world were conducted in Greek and Latin. This is a grand mistake. A knowledge of the verbal inflexions of the ancients is no doubt a good thing, but a practical acquaintance with the vocal inflexions of the moderns is by far a better; a knowledge of the wisdom of the olden sages is not to be despised, but the power to give it utterance in our own language is the more enviable acquisition; the precepts of the ancient philosophers and rhetoricians are well worth knowing, and the models of their eloquence are fully deserving of our study, but it were greatly better to imitate their practice than barrenly to peruse their precepts, and to rival their speeches in our own tongue rather than to blunder over their periods in the mummy-lore of antiquity. There is no language the sounds of

which have ever vibrated on human ears, but the exploration of its literary remains might be profitable to the mass of mankind ; but there is certainly no literature that can so richly profit men, individually, as that of their own country and their own age. Award what distinctions you please to the erudition of scholarship, there is no linguistic accomplishment equal in social value to that of an elegant familiarity with our vernacular language.

Elocution, the highest department of this vernacular study, is slightly esteemed—nay, it has got a positively bad name—among the literary classes, as a trifling, worthless, manneristic, unnatural thing ; whereas it is, when rightly understood, a highly refining and pre-eminently intellectual study. The truth is, the name Elocution is applied to that which is not Elocution at all. It is a mere abuse of the term to call that Elocution which does not enable a man to pronounce with propriety, to deliver language according to the usage of polite society, to declaim with physical ease, and to read with the tones of natural conversation.

I regret that, in conclusion, I cannot say of our system of school discipline that it lays a good foundation for Oratory ; I cannot even limit the expression of its influence to a negative : I must add, that it is positively detrimental ; that school neglect is practically equivalent to school encouragement of vicious habits of delivery ; and that to our schools may be distinctly traced the unnatural intonations and the uncouth deformities which characterize our Public Oratory. As Quintilian in his *Institutes*,—a book as fresh in its maxims, and as applicable to the necessities of the present day, as if it had been written for these times, instead of eighteen centuries ago,—as Quintilian begins his orator's training in the juvenile and rudimental stage of education, so we must commence our reformation—if reform we are to have—with our teaching of the elements of language, and instil our principles of correct delivery in the infant mind. Thus only, but thus surely, will improvement be achieved, and the disgrace be removed of our present Pulpit, Platform, and National inefficiency in the Art of Speech.

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